WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a packet communication system having a plurality of independently operating nodes, including a local node, which have limited available communication time and which are capable of monitoring busy time and idle time in cyclical epochs, a method for determining a load on the communication time of the local node in communication with a plurality of other nodes comprising:

synchronizing periods of load measurement among nodes to a communication epoch; and

factoring out the load attributed by the local node to the global load.

2. In a packet communication system having a plurality of independently operating nodes, including a first node and a second node, which have limited available communication time and which are capable of monitoring busy time and idle time in cyclical epochs, a method for determining a load on the communication time of the first node with said second node comprising:

broadcasting from the first node a first heartbeat and thereupon resetting a global counter at the first node at a first epoch;

receiving at the second node said first heartbeat and resetting a second node counter for the first node;

transferring traffic of the first node with the second node and accumulating total traffic duration in the global counter at the first node;

receiving traffic from the first node at the second node and accumulating second node traffic duration in a first node counter at the second node;

broadcasting a second heartbeat from the first node at the beginning of the next epoch, including value of the global counter, and resetting the global counter for a second epoch;

receiving the second heartbeat and the global counter value at the second node; and

determining a net loading for the first node as viewed by the second node by factoring out contribution to the global counter value during the first epoch.

3. The method according to claim 2 further including:

averaging the net loading over several epochs.

4. The method according to claim 2 further including:

using the net loading in selecting a best path for traffic of the second node.